



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

DISCUSSION

To the Editor of the "School Review":

SIR: In the *School Review* of October, 1913, appears an article on the "Relative Efficiency of Public and Private Secondary Institutions" which prompts me to a few kindly criticisms.

An analysis of college marks shows a much larger percentage of honor pupils coming from public high schools than from private institutions. Mr. Potter attempts to solve the problem of the relative efficiency of these two classes of schools by a study of the marks of students in the University of Chicago. The arrangement and graphical elucidation of the statistics at his disposal are admirable; unfortunately, as is so often the case, the statistics do not point at all conclusively to the conclusions stated. In this particular paper, it is peculiar that, after the author's statement that "from the foregoing charts and tables the conclusion is evident that as an agency preparing for college the high school is far superior to the academy," a second set of statistics reveals the strongest kind of an argument against the conclusions reached.

To be brief, the first set of statistics shows that the normal distribution curve in the case of academy pupils is "skewed" toward the lower marks, with the median student falling within four of C; in the case of high-school students it is "skewed" toward the higher marks, the median here being "within 20" (!) of being B.

The second set of statistics, however, shows that the distribution of high-school pupils is that of a "selected group" comprising but 5.57 per cent of the total pupils registered in that type of school; in the case of the academy pupils it is again a "selected group" comprising 16.33 per cent of those enrolled in that type of school.

One must beware of comparing distribution curves of "selected groups," especially of those selected by different agencies. If such comparison be made, *the nature of the "selected group"* must first be carefully examined, and then if the two curves still appear comparable, due allowance must always be made for the selective factors. Such a comparison is a delicate matter, and is very seldom fruitful of information which can frankly be accepted as valuable. Mr. Potter fails to notice the "selected" character of the two groups whose distribution he has plotted; and valid statistical information which might make allowance for selection possible is of such a nature that we cannot even attempt to obtain it.

A few words, I think, will suffice to show that the author of the article is not dealing with "chance selection," and to indicate what the different causes are which govern selection in one group as compared with the other.

It will be granted that the group from high schools is selected more by natural fitness for college work than is the group from private schools. Mr. Potter recognizes the fact that the function of the high school is not college preparation; while his figures show that this is the avowed purpose of at least a large number of private schools. The high school aims to divert the pupil naturally unfitted for college from that goal to another; the private school attempts to prepare its pupils for college regardless of their fitness.

Experience in two excellent private schools, Milton Academy, Massachusetts, and the Horace Mann High School, of Teachers College, New York, has taught me that the parent demands that his son (or daughter) be prepared for college, regardless of the latter's "parts" or interests; and if the school cannot itself give all the necessary aid, funds for private "coaching" are forthcoming. Many pupils, after failing in public schools, reach college through the more individual attention possible in private institutions. The public schools are thus relieved of some who later tend to "skew" the normal distribution curve of private-school pupils toward a lower median in college.

Again, for obvious reasons college scholarships with stipends act as more cogent incentives to the majority of pupils from public schools than to those from private schools; and, in addition, the average student from the private school has usually many interests apart from his studies, interests which are beyond the financial reach of the public-school student.

A longer exposition seems hardly necessary. So familiar are these facts to us all that mere mention of them would suffice.

In the case of the Public Latin School of Boston, the record of its graduates at Harvard College is one to be proud of indeed. As a school whose peculiar function, as compared with that of the other city high schools, is college preparation, it also eliminates many pupils, some of whom might in private institutions finally succeed in "getting into college." Would it be fair to compare the college marks of its graduates with the marks of graduates of institutions which have received its failures? Is the work of the private school thereby declared inferior?

Yours sincerely,

ALBERT F. REED

PUBLIC LATIN SCHOOL
BOSTON, MASS.